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TREES

Gregory Duke Everhart



INTRODUCTION

These words are my mouth
for my mouth has no words
that I can find
the words I have
slip on my lips
and trip over my tongue
they never come out
the way they should
then there is this pen
it is very unique
for it has all the right words
that my mouth seems to lack
these words, from this pen,
are my mouth.

—Bonnie M. Garramone

AND THE DEAD

for Larry Merkel

When you were in Ethiopia you wrote:

the dead lie scattered
like stones in the streets,
humans crushed and peeled.

This is how we see death.
A glimpse we didn't mean to open on.
The dummy with its stuffing hanging out.
The sacred proved sacrificial.

—Jeanne Cunningham

REMEMBER IT ALL

Anmarie Nemetz



LET'S GO STEADY

She stood before the mirror alternately fluffing up and smoothing down the crown of her hair as she practiced her innocent seductive half-smile. She hadn't quite decided whether to stress the innocence or the seductiveness, when her mother called.

"Dorice, Dorice dear, O.J.'s here." She was using the syrupy voice reserved for company, so Dorice knew she was impressed with O.J.

Having already surmised from the few previous dates that O.J. wasn't ready for the seductive, Dorice spent a few minutes preparing an effective innocent, with a touch of the alluring, expression for her face to wear. Then, checking the front zipper of her shirt to insure the deliberate naturalness of the space it left open, she counted to ten slowly and left the room.

O.J. swallowed nervously when Dorice made her entrance, almost choking on his oversize adam's apple. Looking at him, she was reminded of the expression about a bull in a china shop and, smiling as practiced, Dorice coolly calculated O.J.'s reaction to her appearance. She had chosen the pale blue plaid skirt and matching zip-up sweater top carefully, conscious of how they enhanced her blue eyes and fully aware of O.J.'s preference for safe, old fashioned girls. Her foresight was rewarded by O.J.'s appreciative glance and his mumbled "Hi Dorice."

"Hello, O.J. Ready to go?" She pecked a kiss on her mother's cheek, surprising her mother as much as herself, and being careful not to trip over O.J.'s big feet, she crossed past him and made for the door. Her "don't worry Mom, we won't be too late," echoed behind the closing of the front door.

Sensing that O.J. was concentrating on his driving and not ready for chatter, Dorice carefully appraised the situation. This was their fourth date, and remembering last night's attempt, she knew the question of going steady would come up again tonight. She would see to that. Feeling that he wouldn't require much prodding, Dorice began thinking of her new steady. She had already checked the size of his hands and knew that his fingers were big enough to cause his ring to be appropriately incongruous when placed on her hand.

Remembering Mary Sue's wistful comment that she thought he

was cute, in a way, Dorice began to assess him from this aspect. At first she wondered what had prompted Mary Sue's comment, but on closer inspection she could see its validity . . . in a way. He *was* too skinny and had a set of feet too big even for his 5'11" frame, but he did have nice features and nice expressionable brown eyes. Granted, he did have pimples and forgot to zip his pants on occasion, but he did drive a nice car.

Realizing that she deserved better, Dorice also admitted that O.J. wasn't too far beneath her. One of O.J.'s biggest assets was that he was to be the sixth man on the basketball team. Since four of the five first stringers were securely taken, Dorice thought she was really doing quite well. Besides, Mary Sue had said she thought he was cute.

Dorice was still musing on what Mary Sue's comment would be when she found out, when O.J. startled her by talking.

"What did you think of the football game Friday?"

"We played a good game even though we lost . . . didn't we?"

"We played lousey – Don't you know nothing about football?"

"Not very much. It's so complicated. It must take a lot of brains to figure out what to do where."

"Not really." O.J., in his prime now that the conversation was on football, proceeded to explain the simple intricacies of the game to the typical female.

Yawning inwardly, but with an interested attentive gaze focused on O.J., Dorice stayed only close enough to reality to interject with a few expressions of "Oh, now I get it," or "Oh, now I understand." She could hear her mother's reaction now.

"You're too young. Why, at sixteen, you should be playing the field, getting to know a lot of young men."

"But Mom . . ." Dorice wouldn't tell her how dangerous it was to "get to know" a lot of young men.

"There are too many fishes in the sea for you to be tied down to one."

"But I don't want the other fish. I want O.J."

Oh, oh, she had goofed. From the strange expression of O.J.'s face Dorice could tell she had made a blunder. Not knowing what she or O.J. had said she could only respond with "I'm sorry O.J. I didn't understand what you said."

"That's okay."

Fearing irreparable damage Dorice quickly changed the subject. "What did you think of that history test of Mrs. Baxter's?"

"I thought it was one of the worst tests I've ever taken." The thing that really bugged me about the test . . ." On safe grounds once again, Dorice chatted with O.J. on several mundane topics before lapsing into silence.

The silence had lasted only about a minute and a half when Dorice, groping frantically for some topic to introduce naturally, found relief in the lights of the drive-in. Content a few minutes later with popcorn and Coke in hand, neither O.J. nor Dorice felt compelled to make conversation. An occasional giggle at the Road Runner cartoon was sufficient from Dorice.

It was about halfway into the first picture that, with popcorn and Coke finished, they became conscious of the silence. O.J. had already coughed and placed his arm around Dorice, and she in turn, inched almost imperceptively closer. When the action on the screen became a little dull, O.J. leaned over and kissed her. Dorice thought about the drive-in's nickname, the "passion-pit," and almost giggled in the middle of the kiss. O.J. was more amusing than passionate. Trying not to throw up when he inserted his tongue between her teeth, she responded, forming the proper suction for his tongue. She almost gagged when the saliva became so abundant that she had to swallow, but this she could accept. It was when he clomped his hand on her breast that she squirmed and sat up. She knew that he expected it, and smoothing down her hair, she smiled at him.

Breaking the silence, O.J. asked tentatively, "Dorice, uh, uh, this is our fourth date and uh, I was uh wondering, uh, uh . . ."

"Yes, O.J." Remembering last night's identical scene, where at the crucial point he had ended up with "Do you want to go out tomorrow night," Dorice wasn't about to be disappointed again.

"What are you trying to say O.J.?" Dorice asked, the picture of innocence.

"Uh, would you . . . uh, would you go steady with me?" Obviously relieved and yet apprehensive of the answer, the Question streamed out of his mouth in a torrent.

Feigning surprise, Dorice exclaimed, "Why O.J.! Well, uh, I really don't know. I didn't know you were that serious about me."

"Forget it, I'm sorry . . . it was dumb of me."

“Of course I’ll go steady with you. I promise not to date anyone else . . . Where’s your ring.”

“Oh Wow, Dorice.”

They met to seal the exchange of rings with another kiss. Afterwards Dorice once again smoothed down her hair, and putting up a hand as if to cover a cough, she discretely caught the saliva that was ready to slide down her chin.

She pondered why she had accepted the sparkling green ring now sitting on the fourth finger of her right hand, and since she now had a date to the upcoming Homecoming Dance, plus the fact that the green of the stone matched perfectly the dress she would wear, she considered such things as O.J.’s sloppy kissing and pimples of little consequence. Besides, now she would have someone to carry her books to class for her. It was embarrassing when she had to carry them herself. She couldn’t wait to tell Mary Sue.

After engaging in a few more minutes of necking, whereas this time Dorice allowed him to fondle her size 33 breasts, they departed for home, oblivious to the movie they had come to see, and both feeling that they had gotten the better end of the deal.

—Charlene Wilton

The performer—

a man in navy

And then silence—

the only noise

the thin paper whisper of programs

and that

only for a moment.

The man in navy

unfolds his music

stretches his hands across the keyboards

then glances quickly

at the stops and his feet

All is as it should be

and he is ready.

No one moves—

two hundred people

all sit

with their eyes on the man

or the shining silver and brass of the pipes

Their minds and bodies—

their souls

filled with eager, nervous hope—

awaiting

The beginning—

the first quarter of a minute

that will reveal

the grandeur and the magnificence of the instrument

The first quarter of a minute—

the time—

the only time

when the music will fall

pure

on minds and souls

which are fully awake

and on ears in which

no just-heard melody

still rings.

The performer
 begins to play
 and
The music
 floods the room—
 fulfilling, then excelling every hope
 and stealing every soul.

—Emily F. Pispeky

THEY'RE TEARING DOWN THE SWINGS

No more free rides to the moon
Thrills of suspended time
Flying feet that dangle in the sky
 pumping desperately to soar even higher.
They're bringing you down for your final landing.
Gonna ground you for good.
Bulldoze your dream machine, bring it
 tumbling to earth where you should have stayed
Instead of running to that swing you found
Actually thinking, you could close your eyes
 and never, ever have to come down.

—Beverly Swartz

THE CELL

Sharon Park



SAVE YOUR PADDED CELLS

robbed of laughing days
and smiling times
she was caged in a cell
where lonely tears were her
only company
and the screams she heard
were strangers
down the hall
she lay in a crumpled, matted
heap on the cold cement floor
there was no bed for her
she remembered through hazy recollections
a pock-marked orderly
saying something about too many patients
and not enough room to put them all
and the screams she heard
were endless mallets
pounding at her mind
dying for a drink of water
to moisten her dry, dusty lips
she looked up and wondered
where they hid the faucet
in this premature coffin
and the screams she heard
were hands
pulling, probing
stealing her sanity
darkness became eternity
hope disappeared into the past
she collapsed,
exhausted,
in a fetal heap on the floor
and the screams she heard
became
her own.

—Bonnie M. Garramone

A PERFECT DAY FOR HUNTING

"Sure is a perfect day for hunting," grinned Mr. Jennings.

I settled back in the old familiar chair and waited for him to continue. I knew the story well but couldn't disappoint him by not listening.

"Ever been deer hunting Betty?" My name is Debbie but I always answered to Betty. It was easier since Mr. Jennings never seemed to remember.

"No, Mister Jennings, I never have," I replied.

"Yessir, best hunter in the country, I was," said Mr. Jennings. "Not a person for miles around could outshoot me." He lay back against his pillow with his eyes closed as if reliving his younger days.

"Betty, hand me my gun, please." I walked to his closet and pulled out the toy rifle.

"Be careful, Betty," he said as I brought the gun to him. "It's loaded, you know, and I'd hate for it to go off in your hands." He gently took the gun from me and examined it as if he were making sure it was in good condition. Satisfied that the gun was okay he put it under the sheet beside him and continued with his story.

"My son's coming to take me hunting in a few minutes. I sure wish he'd hurry because I'd hate for John Smith to get a deer before I did."

The door opened and a starched nurse hurried in. "You didn't pass my son when you came in did you?" asked Mr. Jennings. The nurse ignored the question and roughly straightened the sheet, hitting her arm on the gun.

"Why don't you just throw that silly toy away?" snapped the nurse. Mr. Jennings looked hurt and turned away from her. After wiping up some water that she had spilled the nurse turned to leave the room shaking her head. She stopped by me and mumbled, "I feel sorry for you, honey. He's crazy. He tells the same old story every day about how his son is coming to take him hunting. His son hasn't been to see him in years." She had attempted to whisper but I knew that Mr. Jennings had heard by the expression on his face.

We sat in silence a few minutes, feeling the coldness of the room. Mr. Jennings finally said, "Wonder why he isn't here, yet? He's usually here by now."

"Well you know how the traffic is Mr. Jennings," I replied. "He should be here soon, I'm sure. While we're waiting, why don't you tell me some more of your hunting stories?"

The old man's eyes glistened as he settled back to tell me some more of his stories. "I reckon he'll be here to rectly," he said. "Did you ever know a hunter to be on time?" He chuckled to himself as if he were remembering a good private joke. He was still smiling when a nurse came in to take him to dinner. I was glad to see that it was a different nurse this time.

"I've got to be running anyway. I'll see you next week, Mr. Jennings," I said.

"Good bye, Betty. Would you mind putting my gun back in its case before you go? It's had a good work out today," he said. As he left the room I heard him telling the nurse all about the deer that he had shot that day.

I walked slowly to my own home two blocks away. I thought back over the two years that I had visited 95 year old Mr. Jennings. Even though his face was wrinkled and his smile was almost toothless, there was still a sparkle in his blue eyes. I looked forward to my weekly visits. Each week I heard the same stories and went through the same game of getting his gun out of his closet. His stories were always the same. I learned from him. He had a great love for nature and the out of doors. The excitement with which he told his stories made me learn to appreciate nature. I grew to enjoy long walks in the woods. Mr. Jennings could always tell me the names of flowers and plants just by my describing them. Fancying myself as becoming quite a naturalist I looked forward to telling him about my new discoveries each week.

One November afternoon after I came in from school the phone rang. It was Mrs. Martin from the nursing home. She said that Mr. Jennings was having heart trouble and she knew that I'd want to know about it. They didn't think he had much longer to live.

I knew that Mr. Jennings' dying was inevitable, but I had never let myself think about it. I went quickly to the nursing home and ran straight to the old familiar room. I could barely see Mr. Jennings. Two doctors and four nurses surrounded his bed and they were all straining to understand him. He was under an oxygen tent and his speech was garbled. I understood what he said. He wanted his gun. I ran to the closet and pulled out the gun. The nurses moved away and I walked toward the old man. His face lit up with a painful grin and his eyes twinkled as he struggled to reach out his old wrinkled hand. As I reached his bed his smile froze and his eyes slowly closed. The room was still. The nurses moved quickly and pulled the sheet over his head. I turned and left the room. Tears were rolling down my face as I walked home, feeling a certain emptiness surround me. I reached my room

before I noticed that I was still clutching tightly to the toy gun.

I sat in silence for a long time. The day was beautiful. It was a perfect day for Mr. Jennings to have gone hunting. Feeling compelled to go for a walk, I started downstairs. I was on my front porch when I remembered. Running back to my room I picked up the gun. I might see a deer on my walk and the gun was already loaded.

—Debbie Patterson

POET

Images boiling madly in your
Black mind, spill across pages
In irretractible ink
Hugging the linen white paper
Like a shroud.
You sit, an audience,
Watching your little acrobats
Leap, spin and hang suspended in
Mid air blank spaced
Forever and ever.

Do not create anything.
It will be misinterpreted.
It will change nothing.
It will follow you the rest of your life.

—Jeanne Cunningham

CALLES



УНЧСД НЗДНО



SHE'LL KILL HERSELF ON AN URGE

She leaned against the cash register, filing her nails. Occasionally she looked out the front window of the drive-in whenever she heard a big truck go by. She tried to imagine what each driver looked like and where he was headed. The neon sign in front of the building flashed on and off, its reflection shining on the wet pavement: DAN'S DRIVE-IN and DAIRY KING — SEA FOOD and CHICKEN BOXED TO GO.

"Ruby, stop daydreaming and come around to the grill." The manager, Mrs. Foster, bustled around looking for her purse. "You'll drive the customers away, standing around and staring like that. And put that file away. It looks nasty, you cleaning your fingernails around here while we're fixing food." She found her purse behind the milkshake machine. "Start fixing sandwiches, Ruby. I want to go home early for once and I need you over here until the night crew comes in."

Ruby walked slowly over to the sandwich counter, touching at her stiff orange hair. I should've used more hair spray this morning, she thought. I know I must look a real mess. She reached into the pocket of her grease-stained white uniform and pulled out a tube of Passion's Rose, applying it to her lips as she watched her reflection in the side of the aluminum toaster. She wished now that she had ordered a tube of Orange Frost from the Avon lady last week. If Sonny came in tonight like he promised, she wanted to look her best.

Two of the night workers came in just as Mrs. Foster was leaving. Pearl Marie was sixteen, pimply-faced and skinny. Tommy, Mrs. Foster's son, was seventeen.

"Son, get that hair out of your face before I put a hair-net on you," his mother said. "You two kids stop standing around like you didn't have nothing else to do. Pearl Marie, you stop that giggling every time a boy even looks at you. And if that boy of yours comes in here, Ruby, don't you stand around talking half the night. I don't pay ya'll to settle your family disputes in here." She left through the back door.

Ruby's sixteen-year old son walked up to the counter. Pearl Marie giggled.

"Can I help you, Nicky?" she said.

"Yeah, I want to see my old lady." He puffed on a cigarette, blowing the smoke through his nostrils. Ruby walked to the window.

He dropped the cigarette to the floor, grinding it with the heel of his scuffed brown boot. He took a crumpled slip of yellow paper out of the back pocket of his jeans.

Nicky threw the piece of paper onto the counter in front of his mother, exhaling a last bit of cigarette smoke into the air. It settled above her head and she waved it away with her hand.

"Honey, Mrs. Foster just now told me to stop talking to you while I'm working. You better stop coming in here so often." She picked up the slip of paper. "What's this?"

"Mr. Hall at school said for me to give it to you and Daddy. It's about me not going to class." He ran his fingers through his dark hair. "Mama, I need some money."

"Nicky, what have you been doing if you're not going to class?" Her eyes darted quickly to his face, but he avoided her glance.

"Dammit all, I brought you the note, didn't I? I go to school when I feel like it."

"You hang around with that bunch me and your daddy don't want you out with, that's what you do," she said, reaching under the popcorn machine for her purse. "How much money do you need. And what on earth do you want it for?"

"I need five dollars. Jimmy and me are helping John Tarn buy gas for his car. It's not right for me and him to ride around with John and not buy gas."

She handed the money to her son. He put it in his shirt pocket, buttoning it.

"This running around with them boys is got to stop, Nicky. That John drives like he's crazy."

"How do you know what he drives like? Do you go riding with him too?" he said, starting to leave.

Ruby glared after him. "Don't you let your daddy hear you talking like that."

"I don't need to tell Daddy anything. He finds out what he needs to know." He rushed out, slamming the door behind him.

She turned around just as Mr. Foster, who was the night manager as well as Mrs. Foster's husband, walked in.

"Ruby, I just saw your husband at the feed store. He wants you to bring some fried chicken home with you tonight for him and the kids," he said.

Mazie Wells, the other night cook, came in. "It sure looks like a storm's coming up, don't it? Maybe it'll knock the lines down and we can clean up and go home. It won't do no good to stay open with no electricity."

Nobody answered, and she laughed. "I can tell already that ya'll are in a real good mood for Friday night."

Ruby went back behind the grill and started fixing orders. She sure hoped Sonny would come by tonight and take her to that big restaurant like he promised. He kept coming in from time to time, always telling her that he was just waiting for the right time to take her out. She even brought her good dress to work with her tonight and hid it in the employees' bathroom. She was all set to go if he happened to come in.

Customers came in groups at half-hour intervals. Just when the crew thought they were due for a slack spell, another bunch hustled in like a whirlwind. Ruby leaned over to Mazie and whispered her plans for the night if Sonny came around.

Mazie laughed. "How are you going to explain that to your old man? He might get just a little bit suspicious."

"I figured you could take the chicken by the house and tell him and the kids that I'm helping Mr. Foster with the inventory. I've just got this urge to get out and do something exciting for once."

Mazie stared at her. "A person could kill herself on an urge."

Thunder and lightning began to crack and boom. The storm got worse as the night dragged on, and business began to slack off. An occasional car would pull in. When it rained too heavily the people would wait in the car a few minutes before getting out. Some wouldn't even get out if it poured down for too long. They just drove away.

Ruby jumped every time the door opened, expecting Sonny to walk in at any minute. Although it was warm inside, she shivered as she looked out and watched the cold drizzle coming down. The lights flickered off and on several times, launching Mr. Foster into a lecture on emergency measures to take in case of a blackout.

"We're not having a blackout, Daddy," Tommy said. "We're having a thunderstorm."

"Shut up, boy," his father replied. "It's time to close up now. Let's everybody get to work and start cleaning up." He lit a cigar.

Pearl Marie was wiping the front counter with a wet towel. She

looked up and giggled. Sonny Martin stood before her. "You better come quick, Ruby, and catch this man of yours before he gets away." Everybody knew about Ruby's plans.

Ruby walked slowly to the window. Sonny was short, muscular, and tanned from the sun. His wavy brown hair was combed back behind his ears. He wore maroon knit slacks and a yellow western shirt with imitation pearl buttons.

Ruby felt her hands trembling.

"Hi, brown eyes," Sonny said winking at her. "What time do you get off, sugar?"

She took a deep breath. "I'll be out in ten minutes."

He grinned. "Don't hurry. I'm parked around back. I'll be waiting." He left.

Ruby went back and changed into the other dress. She felt like singing. It was just like she always dreamed it would be. She could hardly wait until they got into Richmond. She loved all the bright lights and fancy restaurants.

She put her coat on. She didn't want Mr. Foster to see that she had changed clothes. On her way out she stopped to speak with Mazie. All Mazie did was grin.

"Mazie, are you going to stop by the house for me?"

"Yeah, I'll do it. If for no other reason than to keep your husband from getting his shotgun out and killing you both if he finds out," she said.

Ruby called good-night to Mr. Foster and walked out the back door. She went quickly to the white Lincoln parked in the shadows. She hummed a tune as she walked. Reaching the car, she got in as Sonny opened the door for her. He got in, leaned over, and fastened her seat belt for her.

"You want to hear Porter Wagoner or Conway Twitty?" he asked, reaching for a stack of stereo tapes on the dashboard.

"Put Conway on. He's my favorite," she said. Just as she had settled back and made herself comfortable, he reached over and turned her face toward him, kissing her. She pulled away.

"Sonny, stop that. They can still see us from inside." Peering into the mirror, she straightened her hair.

He started the car and pulled out onto the highway. "That's what you're going out with me for, isn't it?" he said.

“Not where people can see,” she said. “Which way are we going?”

“We’re just going down the highway a little ways. It’s not too far.”

“But I thought you were taking me to that restaurant in Richmond, Sonny.”

“Honey, that’s twenty miles from here. We can either go to my place or to the Pike Inn down the road. Take your pick.” It had started to rain again. He turned the windshield wipers on. Turning up the volume, he began to hum along with the music.

“The Pike Inn? Not that old beer hall down the river, Sonny?” She stiffened in her seat.

“Well, why not? All my friends go down there. I can’t afford any fancy restaurants while I’m paying for this car.”

“But you promised me, Sonny. Why did you promise me?”

“For crying out loud, Ruby, you’d think we were married. I’m calling the shots, honey, and don’t you forget it. I can always turn right around and dump you in your front yard if that’s the way you want it. Here, light this cigar for me.”

She lit the cigar. She didn’t feel like singing anymore.

—Jean Tate

HOUSE

Gregory Duke Everhart

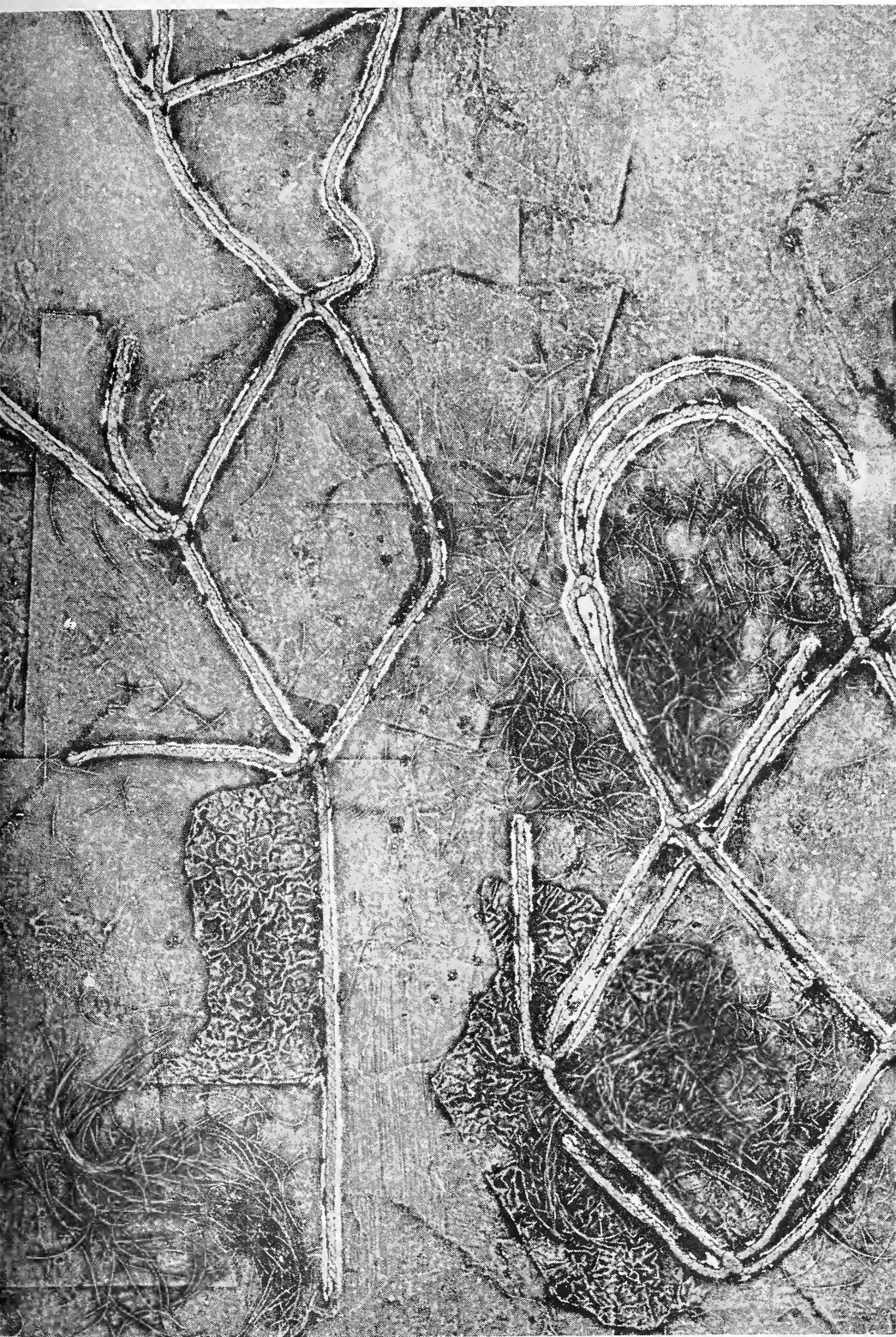


GOLDEN SILENCE

No voices to be heard,
but those in the past.
No friends to see,
but those in my mind.
Time and the world are at a standstill,
but time passes on.
Nothing to see anymore,
but memories.

Come morning, pieces will fit back into place
but the future.
Time will pass on.
Thoughts of voices I will be hearing,
and friends I will be seeing,
and memories that will one day
come to be my past is a joyful one.
For everyday is a gift,
and gifts are beautiful.

—Mary Kay Wilcoxson



A PLAY

Adventure

Venturing down highways
Red tinsel man plays his songs
Ramblin' on . . .

Across the river

she lays on her back
Ants crawl in and out her breast
Making their homes in the fleshy nests.

Shave my head

Pregnant ladies sing songs
Blue-eyed cat man finding his home
Cannot roam
It's a cage
He's inflamed.

Is it a song, a stage

A set of games we play
I taunt you, take the bait
Why are we here?
I love you.

Sad songs, sad lady

Smile.

Will you understand

Run away, or stand

Tell me the reasons why not

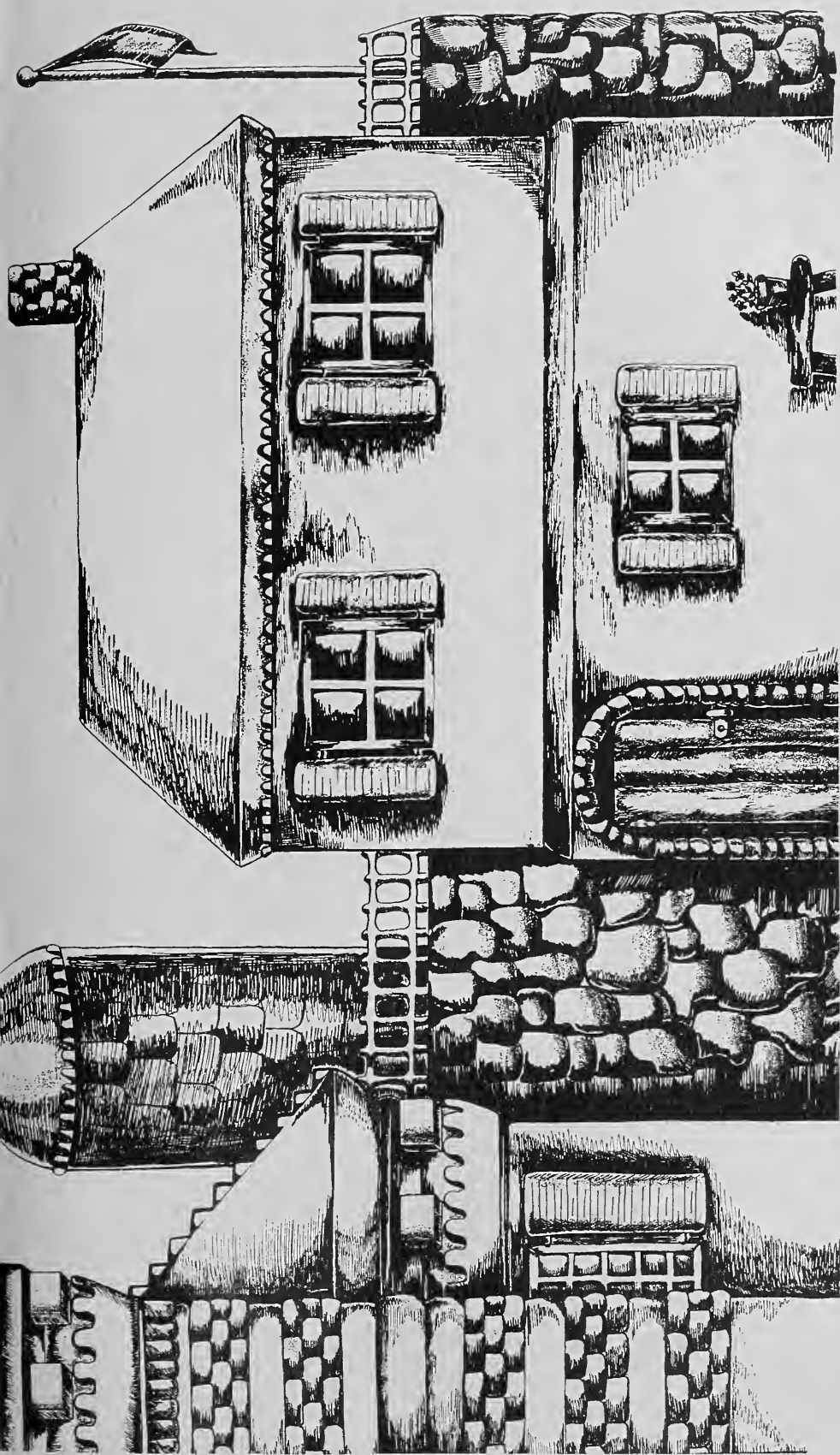
While I tell you all the reasons why

I know you more than you'll go.

I love you.

SECOND ACT, PART I?

—Deborah G. Pugh



Sharon Park

GLASGOW

CELEBRATION FOR DIONYSUS

Slamming the car door, Barbara Winthrop hurried to the rear of her little station wagon, and pulling the tailgate open, gently lifted a large rather massively heavy bundle wrapped in cold, soaking wet towels from the wire crate within. She kned the door shut and struggled across the parking lot, up the steps, and into the veterinary hospital.

The desk receptionist greeted her with, "This way; the doctor's waiting," and motioned the girl to follow her down the hallway and into a small, institution green, metallic room filled with equipment and smelling of antiseptic. The middle-aged veterinarian turned from the sink and helped her ease the dog onto the dull grey luster of the examining table. Shaking down a thermometer, he asked,

"Heatstroke, huh, Did you leave him closed up in a car?"

Barbara shook her head in emphatic, worried denial. "Oh, no, of course not. He was in the shade with plenty of water, and I kept checking on him and squeezing a wet sponge over his head, and . . . but . . ."

"All right." He looked up at her and said with kindly medical concern, "Why don't you go sit in the waiting room. It may be a while. I'll call you." At her hesitation, he prodded, "Go on."

Barbara left. Taking a seat on a softly yellow vinyl chair in the corner, she gazed unseeingly at the cute animal prints decorating the paneled walls, thinking.

Dionysus was more than simply an animal conceived by nature and raised by human hands; he was, in his well-bred way, an *object d'art*, a sculpture formed by the mind and influence of man. In her attempt to create the perfect English Springer Spaniel, Barbara searched through generations of pedigrees and pictures to find the best possible mate for her champion show bitch which was not hers; she (the bitch) owed allegiance to no one but Barbara's father. A possible sire must, to meet her high standards, possess not only an heritage as royal as the bitch's, but compliment her structural faults in an attempt to create a forthcoming generation with as few deviations from the standard of perfection as possible, as well. After having narrowed down the list of acceptable sires, she finally chose one with which she felt she could best model her canine clay.

Seven puppies resulted, and Barbara kept the best for herself. Although she could not tamper with the basic model, the girl enhanced

it by presenting her puppy with the best possible care she could give, and Dion became hers in a way her bitch which was not hers never had.

The dog developed into a beautiful Springer. His finely chiseled head with the long spaniel ears and the soft, intelligently sparkling hazel eyes blended into a long, clean, elegant neck and nicely made shoulders. The almost perfectly level topline rounded into a tail set a bit too low. The dog was well angulated, shoulder and stifle, and nicely coupled. For color he wore a deep, rich liver coat with a white muzzle and blaze and show collar, and white chest, belly, and legs, all furnished with a feathery fringe of finest silk. In a show stance, Dionysus was the beautiful statue Barbara had so thoughtfully planned, a classical image, indicating a latent bursting energy, an idealistic reality, frozen now and forever for all the world to admire and imitate.

But Dion was more than a still-life for even the intricate beauty of a classic cannot contain the proud elegance of a vibrant nature. At an animated trot, the gait at which he flashed around the show ring, his forelegs reached out to meet the ground as a story's characters reach out to touch the reader, and his driving rear propelled him forward as a superb plot thrusts the reader into the action of fiction. The dog's topline, always level, proved the smoothness of reach and drive. And like the unforgettable character he was, Dionysus followed Barbara constantly, if not at her heels, then always in her mind. He was, in the form of a fine art, both a lamp guiding her along the mysterious path of creativity, and a mirror, reflecting the hopes and dreams of the girl who had created him.

For three years Barbara showed Dion only during the summer when she could be at home to work with him, but now, in the first semester of her senior year and student teaching, she and her best friend had rented an apartment into which the dog so contentedly joined them. With this arrangement, they were able to attend shows almost every weekend.

This early October day while the winning blue of the cloudless sky and the rustiness of old leaves said autumn, the artificial sun lied of summer and convincingly beamed an August-like heat so warm that even the trees appeared to drip with perspiration. Nor did the eight fifty-yard long blue and gold tent tops under which the handlers prepared their charges for the ring while waiting or finished entrants panted quietly in their crates help to reduce the sun's intensity.

Dionysus did not win this day. Returning to his crate, the young dog suddenly stopped, his head down, his pink tongue almost touching the burnt gold grass, his slightly glazed eyes not understanding and

afraid. Picking him up, Barbara felt the heat absorbed by his darkly blanketed body conduct to her bare arms. The show veterinarian, attempting to lower the dog's temperature with cold water and ice, affirmed, "Heatstroke," and asked, "Do you live around here?" Barbara nodded, and he instructed, "Okay, get him to your vet quick as you can." And he carried the now unconscious Dion to her car into which a friend had moved the crate.

She looked up at the clock. Dion had been inside for over two hours.

"Miss Winthrop," the doctor said, and she swiveled her eyes around to him; he was not smiling. She rose and followed him into his office, daring not to ask, afraid not to. He did not even close the door before he said, "I'm sorry, he died."

Barbara stared numbly at him, the words not affecting her. So this is how it ends, she thought, no long life and peaceful death. No emotion. Just, "he died."

The vet always disliked the next necessary question. "Do you want us to dispose of him?"

They would, Barbara knew, throw the dog into a freezer which, when filled to capacity, would be emptied and its contents burned like so much worthless trash. Then Dion would be only a memory of past beauty and love and joy, in time to grow blurred and uncertain.

She had always imagined Dionysus coming to rest by a maple tree under which he could remember its cool green shade in summer and the pattern its bare twigs wove on the white snow of winter, but now the reality of the spade, the open grave, the occupied box repelled her. Her decision, she knew, was purely selfish. Dion, now gone, could feel no more pain; she, the living, would feel nothing else.

"Yes," she said, and walked out.

The novocain of unreality began to wear off as she entered the empty apartment. Her roommate had left for the weekend, and to drown out the roar of the stillness, she switched on the television. Not hungry, she made herself a sandwich anyway. The TV flashed a few clips of the show. Then with the tube still on, Barbara opened a book. But she could not read. She turned off the television and picked up the telephone to call her roommate, hoping almost that she would not be at home, but she was.

"Hi, Phyllis."

"Hi." Hesitation. "Barbara, is anything wrong? You don't sound very happy."

"Phyllis . . . Dionsdead." She said it so fast that she at first

thought Phyllis' fifteen seconds of unbroken shocked silence were ones of incomprehension, but then, as her own words, spoken aloud now for the first time, struck her, she understood.

"Oh, Barbara," Phyllis said. She could see her friend alone in the apartment, for without Dion she *would* be alone. Barbara had loved the dog in a way almost completely incomprehensible to Phyllis; she had lived for Dion, had looked forward to word of him and to her dog publications as the other girls at school had haunted their mailboxes for notes from their boyfriends. But there was more than love to Barbara's love; it concerned aesthetics, dedication, accomplishment, and now three years of this were gone forever with a single stroke of Time. The thought came to Phyllis that her friend might find, not a replacement, but a successor for Dionysus, and she voiced the idea.

"Another dog?" The huge obstacle of beginning again loomed like a mountain before Barbara, and its weight almost crushed her. "No," she said.

But the emptiness of the apartment, of her life suddenly appeared an object more formidable than that mountain. No longer would she arrive home from a long day of teaching to be greeted by fifty-five pounds of liver-and-white enthusiasm, no longer would a yellow plastic bowl bang in hungry impatience against the kitchen cabinets, no longer . . .

"Yes," she said, "yes, I *will* get another dog," and hung up.

—Karen L. Foster

מזרחי-הים-העתיק



המזרחי-הים-העתיק

POST TWILIGHT

Peek out and see—
the purple churns about the eye,
As it opens and closes,
Saying out loud:
The grace is nigh,
The grace is nigh.

The purple now does mix with blue;
They churn together about the eye,
As it opens and closes,
Saying out loud:
The grace is nigh,
The grace is nigh.

Now many shades are mixed therein;
They dash and dip from side to side,
And cry out in a gallant cry;
(Caring not of the hour)
The grace is nigh,
The grace is nigh.

Peek out and see
The myriads of fireflies that haunt the sea of shades,
And twinkle on and off,
Dimly stating:
No time to stay,
No time to stay.

The grace is nigh;
And in preparation of her entrance the fireflies
disperse,
While the shades do bathe and cleanse themselves in
the shower of her grace,

Saying out loud:
She pours to the earth,
She pours to the earth.

The eye is no longer visible;
And the shades are now bright and clear.
As they sit in her grace's flamboyant kingdom,
They smile a wide and glowing smile,
And say out loud:
Her grace is here,
Her grace is here!

—Salena Mack

Opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gyre staff, student body, or administration.

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